

THE KING IS IN THE FIELD

Participant Source Sheets

A Seven-Class Bible Intensive Preparing for Elul and Rosh Hashanah

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Biblical and Rabbinic Texts

Class 1

Awakening the Soul: Understanding the Month of Elul

Haggai 1:1, 5–8, 14

In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came through Haggai the prophet... Thus says the Lord of Hosts: “Consider your ways. You have planted much but harvested little. You eat but are not satisfied. You drink but are not filled. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. One who earns wages earns them for a bag with holes.” Thus says the Lord of Hosts: “Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, bring wood, and build the House. I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified.” And the Lord awakened the spirit of Zerubbabel, the spirit of Joshua the High Priest, and the spirit of the remnant of the people, and they came and performed the work in the House of the Lord.

Exodus 34:1–2, 4–10, 27–28

The Lord said to Moses: “Carve for yourself two tablets of stone like the first ones. I will write upon the tablets the words that were upon the first tablets, which you shattered. Be ready in the morning and ascend Mount Sinai.” Moses arose early in the morning and ascended Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, and he took the two tablets of stone in his hand. The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. The Lord passed before him and proclaimed: “The Lord, the Lord, God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in kindness and truth, preserving kindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.” Moses remained there with the Lord forty days and forty nights. He neither ate bread nor drank water, and He wrote upon the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer 46

On the New Moon of Elul, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: “Ascend to Me on the mountain.” They sounded the shofar throughout the camp, announcing that Moses had ascended, so that Israel would not again stray after idolatry. The Holy One, blessed be He, was exalted through that shofar, as it is written: “God ascends with the sound of the shofar.”

Song of Songs 6:3

I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine; he grazes among the lilies.

Maimonides, Laws of Teshuvah 3:4

Although the sounding of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah is a decree of Scripture, it contains an allusion, as though it were saying: “Awaken, sleepers, from your sleep. Arise, slumberers, from your slumber. Examine your deeds, return in teshuvah, and remember your Creator. Look into your souls. Improve your ways and your deeds.”

Class 2

The King Is in the Field: God's Nearness and Invitation

Deuteronomy 4:7

For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the Lord our God is whenever we call upon Him?

Isaiah 55:6–7

Seek the Lord while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked abandon his way and the sinful person his thoughts. Let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; to our God, for He abundantly forgives.

Psalms 145:18

The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, Likkutei Torah, Re'eh

Before a king enters his city, the people go out to greet him in the field. At that time, everyone who desires may approach him. He receives everyone graciously and shows each person a smiling countenance. When he enters the city, however, they follow him to the royal palace, where entry is possible only by permission.

Exodus 34:6–7

The Lord, the Lord, God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in kindness and truth, preserving kindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, yet He does not simply erase guilt.

Song of Songs 6:3

I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine; he grazes among the lilies.

Maimonides, Laws of Teshuvah 7:6–7

Teshuvah brings near those who were distant. Yesterday this person was separated and far away. Today he is beloved, desirable, close, and a friend. Yesterday he cried out and was not answered; today he cries out and is answered immediately.

Class 3

Teshuvah: The Biblical Path of Repentance and Return

Numbers 5:6–7

When a man or woman commits any sin against another person, thereby acting unfaithfully toward the Lord, that person shall confess the sin that he has committed.

Maimonides, Laws of Teshuvah 1:1

With regard to all the commandments of the Torah, positive and negative, if a person transgresses one of them, whether intentionally or unintentionally, and repents and turns away from his sin, he is obligated to confess before God. How does one confess? He says: “Please, Lord, I have sinned, acted perversely, and transgressed before You. I did such and such. I regret and am ashamed of my deeds, and I will never return to this action.” This is the essence of confession.

Deuteronomy 30:1–10

When all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse that I have placed before you, and you take them to heart among all the nations where the Lord your God has driven you, you will return to the Lord your God and obey His voice with all your heart and all your soul. The Lord your God will then return your captivity, have mercy upon you, and gather you from all the peoples among whom He scattered you. Even if your dispersed people are at the end of the heavens, from there the Lord your God will gather you and take you. The Lord your God will bring you to the land that your ancestors possessed, and you will possess it. The Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul. You will return and obey the voice of the Lord and perform all His commandments.

Deuteronomy 30:11

For this commandment that I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it distant.

Nachmanides on Deuteronomy 30:11

“This commandment” refers to the commandment of teshuvah mentioned in the preceding verses. The statements “You shall take it to heart” and “You shall return to the Lord your God” are commandments that Israel must return to God.

Genesis 3:8–9

Adam and his wife heard the voice of the Lord God moving through the garden, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. The Lord God called to Adam and said to him: “Where are you?”

Hosea 14:2–3, 5

Return, Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled through your iniquity. Take words with you and return to the Lord. Say to Him: “Forgive all iniquity and accept what is good.” I will heal their turning away. I will love them freely, for My anger has turned away from them.

Maimonides, Laws of Teshuvah 7:5

All the prophets commanded concerning teshuvah. Israel will be redeemed only through teshuvah. The Torah has already promised that at the end of Israel’s exile, Israel will ultimately return and immediately be redeemed.

Mishnah Yoma 8:9

For sins between a person and God, Yom Kippur brings atonement. For sins between one person and another, Yom Kippur does not bring atonement until he has appeased the other person.

Isaiah 58:6–7

Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to release the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, to bring the homeless poor into your house, and when you see the naked, to clothe him?

I Kings 18:39

When all the people saw it, they fell upon their faces and said: “The Lord, He is God. The Lord, He is God.”

Class 4

Hearing the Shofar: Spiritual Awakening and Preparation

Leviticus 23:23–25

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: “In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sacred rest, a remembrance through the blast of the shofar, a holy convocation.”

Numbers 29:1

In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a holy convocation. You shall perform no laborious work. It shall be a day of sounding the shofar for you.

Genesis 22:11–14

Abraham lifted his eyes and saw a ram caught in the thicket by its horns. Abraham took the ram and offered it as a burnt offering in place of his son.

Babylonian Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 16a

Why do we sound a ram’s horn on Rosh Hashanah? The Holy One, blessed be He, said: “Sound before Me a shofar made from a ram’s horn, so that I will remember for you the binding of Isaac, son of Abraham, and I will consider it as though you had bound yourselves before Me.”

Exodus 19:16, 19

On the third day, when it was morning, there was thunder and lightning, a thick cloud upon the mountain, and a very strong sound of the shofar. The entire people in the camp trembled. The sound of the shofar grew increasingly strong. Moses spoke, and God answered him with a voice.

Maimonides, Laws of Teshuvah 3:4

Awaken, sleepers, from your sleep. Arise, slumberers, from your slumber. Examine your deeds, return in teshuvah, and remember your Creator.

Psalms 47:2, 6–9

All peoples, clap your hands. Shout to God with a voice of joy. God ascends with the blast; the Lord, with the sound of the shofar. Sing praises to God, sing praises. Sing praises to our King, sing praises. For God is King over all the earth.

Isaiah 27:13

On that day, a great shofar will be sounded. Those lost in the land of Assyria and those dispersed in the land of Egypt will come and bow before the Lord on the holy mountain in Jerusalem.

Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 3:7

If one was passing behind a synagogue or his house was near the synagogue and he heard the sound of the shofar, if he directed his heart, he fulfilled his obligation; if not, he did not fulfill it.

Class 5

Divine Mercy and Judgment: Preparing for the Day of Remembrance

Leviticus 23:24

In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a sacred rest, a remembrance through the sounding of the shofar.

Genesis 8:1

God remembered Noah and every living creature that was with him in the ark, and God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided.

Exodus 2:23–25

The children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out. Their cry rose to God. God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God saw the children of Israel, and God knew.

Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 1:2

At four times the world is judged. On Rosh Hashanah, all who enter the world pass before Him like bnei maron, as it is written: “He fashions all their hearts and considers all their deeds.”

Psalms 33:13–15

From heaven the Lord looks down; He sees all humanity. From His dwelling place He observes all the inhabitants of the earth. He fashions their hearts together and understands all their deeds.

Exodus 34:6–7

The Lord, the Lord, God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in kindness and truth, preserving kindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, yet He does not simply erase guilt.

Ezekiel 18:21–23

If the wicked person turns from all the sins he has committed, observes My laws, and performs justice and righteousness, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the transgressions he committed shall be remembered against him. Do I desire the death of the wicked? Is it not rather that he should return from his ways and live?

Maimonides, Laws of Teshuvah 3:1, 4

Every person has merits and sins. Therefore, throughout the entire year, a person should view himself as though he were equally balanced between merit and guilt, and the world equally balanced between merit and guilt. If he performs one sin, he may tip himself and the world toward guilt; if he performs one commandment, he may tip himself and the world toward merit and salvation.

Jonah 3:8–10

Let every person call mightily to God. Let each one turn from his evil way and from the violence in his hands. Who knows? God may turn and relent. God saw their deeds, that they had turned from their evil way, and God relented concerning the calamity He had declared.

Class 6

Coronation of the King: The Meaning of Rosh Hashanah

Psalm 47:2–3, 6–9

All peoples, clap your hands. Shout to God with a voice of joy. For the Lord Most High is awesome, a great King over all the earth. God ascends with the blast; the Lord, with the sound of the shofar. Sing praises to God, sing praises. Sing praises to our King, sing praises. For God is King over all the earth.

I Kings 1:32–34, 39–40

King David said: “Have Solomon my son ride upon my mule and bring him down to Gihon. Let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there as king over Israel. Sound the shofar and proclaim: ‘Long live King Solomon!’” They sounded the shofar, and all the people proclaimed: “Long live King Solomon!”

Babylonian Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 16a

The Holy One, blessed be He, said: “Recite before Me verses of Kingship, Remembrance, and Shofar. Kingship, so that you will crown Me as King over you. Remembrance, so that your remembrance will arise before Me for good. And through what? Through the shofar.”

Deuteronomy 33:5

He became King in Jeshurun when the heads of the people gathered, together with the tribes of Israel.

Isaiah 44:6

Thus says the Lord, King of Israel and its Redeemer, the Lord of Hosts: “I am first and I am last, and besides Me there is no God.”

Zechariah 14:9

The Lord will be King over all the earth. On that day, the Lord will be One and His name One.

Psalm 93:1–2

The Lord reigns; He is clothed in majesty. The Lord is clothed and girded with strength. The world is established and cannot be moved. Your throne is established from of old; You are from eternity.

Class 7

A New Beginning: Entering the New Year Renewed and Aligned

Nehemiah 8:1–3, 8–12

All the people gathered as one person in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Torah of Moses. Ezra brought the Torah before the congregation on the first day of the seventh month and read from it. They read clearly and explained its meaning so that the people understood. The people wept when they heard the words of the Torah. Nehemiah, Ezra, and the Levites said: “This day is holy to the Lord your God. Do not mourn and do not weep. Go, eat rich foods, drink sweet beverages, and send portions to anyone who has nothing prepared, for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

Ezekiel 18:30–32

Return and turn away from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not become your ruin. Cast away from yourselves all the transgressions you have committed, and make for yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. I do not desire the death of anyone. Therefore, return and live.

Lamentations 3:22–23, 40

The kindnesses of the Lord have not ended, and His mercies are not exhausted. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. Let us examine and investigate our ways, and let us return to the Lord.

Maimonides, Laws of Teshuvah 2:2

What is complete teshuvah? It is when a person has the opportunity to commit the same transgression again, possesses the ability to do it, but separates himself and does not commit it because of teshuvah, not because of fear or lack of strength.

Maimonides, Laws of Teshuvah 2:4

Among the paths of teshuvah are that the penitent cries before God with supplication, gives charity according to his ability, distances himself greatly from the matter in which he sinned, changes his conduct entirely toward the good and upright path, and leaves his place, for exile humbles a person.

Maimonides, Laws of Teshuvah 7:7

How great is teshuvah. Yesterday this person was separated from the Lord, the God of Israel. Today he cleaves to the Divine Presence. He cries out and is answered immediately. He performs commandments and they are received with joy.

Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 86b

Reish Lakish said: Great is teshuvah, for when a person repents out of love, his intentional sins are counted for him as merits.

Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 34b

In the place where penitents stand, even the completely righteous cannot stand.

Pirkei Avot 2:4

Rabbi Eliezer said: “Repent one day before your death.”